

International Education: The European Union

<p>This lesson can take anywhere from one day to a period of one or two weeks, with the extended activities.</p>
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I. Content:

I want my students to understand (or be able to):

- A. Why the “European Community-now the European Union-is (considered) one of the greatest experiments ever undertaken by democratic governments, unlike anything in world history.” (Stuart Eizenstat, former US Ambassador to the European Union)
- B. The conflict created in the European Union by the increased pooled sovereignty and the parallel decrease of national sovereignty.
- C. The important role Germany played in the creation of the European Union and in the success of the EU today.
- D. The comparable issues facing the European Union today and those facing the United States of America under the Articles of Confederation.

II. Prerequisites:

In order to fully appreciate this lesson, the student must know (or be experienced in):

- A. Trace the development of the Continental Congress, the Declaration of Independence, and the Articles of Confederation (See US History I, Block 3 Course of Study Guide.)
- B. Evaluate problems with the Articles of Confederation that led to the need for a new government.
- C. Conflict that arose over issues of national verses state sovereignty as a result of the creation of the Articles of Confederation.

III. Instructional Objective(s):

The student will:

- A. Define what the European Union is.
- B. Understand the history of trade relationship that led to the creation of the European Community
- C. Identify the difficulty for individual nations who feared a loss of national identity with the creation of the European Union.
- D. Compare the American states’ fears of identity loss under the Articles of Confederation to that of the European nations’ fears over the creation of a unified European governing body.

International Education: The European Union

IV. Materials and Equipment

Teacher: Lesson Packet
(Optional)
European Union posters and other materials - obtained from the official website.
“The European Union, A Guide for Americans” booklet - used as a Teacher/Student resource.
Web sites – used for teacher resource or ancillary materials
www.fredonia.edu
www.europa.eu
www.eurunion.org
www.inter-nationes.de

Student: Student handouts

V. Instructional Procedure:

- A. Introduce students to the lesson by reminding them of the sovereignty issues that developed as a result from the creation and governance under the Articles of Confederation. Explain to them that a modern-day example of such issues exists in problems associated in the creation and expansion of the European Union. (Refer to the “Ambassador’s Welcome” Handout for reference information.)
- B. Ask students to respond to the question: “What is the European Union?” Discuss their answers.
- C. Distribute to students the handout “What is the European Union?” and ask them to read about the history of the EU and find a fact about the EU that they did not previously know. Ask some students to share their responses with the class.
- D. Remind students of some of the problems associated with states’ rights versus national sovereignty in the creation of the Articles of Confederation. Ask if they think European nations may have experienced some of those same conflicts.
- E. Wagon Wheel students by dividing the reading from handout “The European Community: Cooperating Nations or Unified Superstate?”

To conduct a Wagon-wheel teaching strategy, divide the students into several groups and assign a different part of the reading to each group. Have the students in the original groups discuss what they read and make sure everyone in their group understands the material well enough to teach it to someone else. Once students have finished the first component of the activity, take one student from each of the divided groups and put them together into a new group. Have each student in the new group teach the others in this new group what they learned from their reading.

International Education: The European Union

- F. Have students go back to their original seats and lead the class in the discussion/writing questions.
- G. Summarize lesson by discussing the similarities countries in the European Union and the U.S. states experienced as they joined together in the creation of unified political and economic systems through the European Union with the passage of the Maastricht Treaty and the United States with the adoption of the Articles of Confederation.

VI. Assessment / Evaluation:

Students will write an essay describing the connection and conflict involved in both the creation of the Articles of Confederation and the European Union.

VII. Idaho Achievement Standards:

- 6-12.USH1.2.1.1 Develop and interpret different kinds of maps, globes, graphs, charts, databases and models.
- 6-12.USH1.4.1.2 Identify fundamental values and principles as expressed in basic documents such as the Declaration of Independence, Articles of Confederation, and the United States Constitution.
- 6-12.USH1.4.1.3 Evaluate issues in which fundamental values and principles are in conflict, such as between liberty and equality, individual interests and the common good, and majority rule and minority protections.
- 6-12.USH1.4.2.2 Explain how and why powers are distributed and shared between national and state governments in the United States.

VIII. Follow Up or Extension Activities:

- A. Invite Alan Rose, local EU presenter, into the classroom. (arose@uidaho.edu)
- B. Invite a local business leader, member of the Idaho Legislature, and a congressional staff person from your local area to come into the classroom and sit on a panel discussing the significance of the EU to your individual community.
- C. Assign students the European Union Project (See student handout) that makes a local connection to the EU.
- D. Have students research the reason some European countries still choose not to belong the EU.

International Education: The European Union

- E. Have students research opinions of the individual EU member states on all issues and make a graph illustrating the differences.
- F. Give students Robert Kagan, Bush's political advisor's, quote, "I consider the European Union as a true geopolitical miracle. (Liberation March 9, 2003). Divide students into teams to debate whether or not they agree with his statement.
- G. Have students research opposition political groups in EU countries and compare them to U.S. states' rights groups.
- H. Discuss with students the idea that new countries just joining the EU had to accept into national law 83,000 pages of previous EU laws/regulations. Have students research and respond to the question, "Is it possible to do this and retain sovereignty?"
- I. Assign student research projects to look for concrete examples of resentment of Brussels interference in local life. (Example: the UK grocer who refused to comply with the new EU law and use kilos and grams in his grocery store.)
- J. Have students research whether economic integration leads to cultural integration. Include how EU leaders can preserve the rich cultural history and traditions gathered and built over centuries while breaking down boundaries and building cohesion. (Example: the resentment by non-English speakers of the domination of the English language in the EU.)
- K. Assign students to compare the populations, GDP earnings, unemployment, etc. of the new entrants to the 15 member states and discuss the difficulties such figures show. Include new candidates Bulgaria, Rumania, Croatia and Macedonia.
- L. Assign the question, "Which is more democratic: a citizen referendum or a parliamentary debate and vote?" Discuss referendum versus parliamentary ratification of the proposed new EU constitution. Research different European leaders opinion on this topic.
- M. Discuss the struggle in the EU to move from unanimous agreement in the Council to qualified majority voting. Research what this means for the small countries in their desire to maintain a voice.
- N. Have students research representative democracy in the EU and the USA. How do American state differences compare with the disproportionate representation in the EU where a German Member of the European parliament represents 830,000 citizens (99 seats for 81 million population) and a Maltese member represents 80,000 citizens (5 seats for 383,000 population).
- O. Assign students to research EU – USA trade wars, such as the battle over allowing the export of genetically modified crops to the EU. Discuss whether these differences are based on science, economics or politics?

International Education: The European Union

- P. With the creation of an EU defense force, there are many questions surrounding its relationship to NATO. Have students discuss what happens when there are policy differences between the EU and the USA. (Example: the Middle East or Iraq.)
- Q. Have students complete the North American Congress Activity (See Handout).

International Education: The European Union

Ambassador's Welcome

Günter Burghardt
Head of Delegation
European Commission
Washington, DC

The political and economic ties between Europe and the United States have been strengthened by a half-century of close cooperation. Together, we can provide the leadership needed to address many global and regional challenges. Fundamental changes in the European Union will enable our partnership to be even more productive.

The EU is now embarked on three historic journeys: the consolidation of its economic integration through the forging of the single European currency, the euro; the implementation of a Common European Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and European Security and Defense Policy (ESDP), including a Rapid Reaction Force; and the real and democratic unification of the European continent. The EU will soon be a community of close to 500 million citizens. By achieving these goals, the EU becomes an even more effective partner for the U.S.

A broad array of issues features in our near-term agenda with the Bush Administration and the U.S. Congress, representing all the policy chapters of the New Transatlantic Agenda. These include global challenges, such as the environment, transnational crime, and infectious diseases; both bilateral and multilateral trade issues; and foreign and security issues, such as our continued cooperation in the Balkans and the relationship of the ESDP with NATO. The fight against global terrorism has become even more crucial in the aftermath of the horrific events of September 11, 2001, and the EU has pledged and continues its full solidarity with the US in that effort.

The foundation of the transatlantic relationship is the common value system shared by our peoples. Of course, it is also helpful to know more about one another; and informing the American public about the institutions and policies of the European Union is an important part of my duties. This *Guide* will hopefully add to your understanding of the EU and the transatlantic partnership.

<http://www.eurunion.org>

International Education: The European Union

What is the European Union?

The European Union is a unique, treaty-based, institutional framework that defines and manages economic and political cooperation among its fifteen European member countries. The Union is the latest stage in a process of integration begun in the 1950s by six countries—Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands—whose leaders signed the original treaties establishing various forms of European integration.

These treaties gave life to the novel concept that, by creating communities of shared sovereignty in matters of coal and steel production, trade, and nuclear energy, another war in Europe would be unthinkable. While common EU policies have evolved in a number of other sectors since then, the fundamental goal of the Union remains the same: to create an ever-closer union among the peoples of Europe.

French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman and French Businessman Jean Monnet History: The Union's Origins

Economic integration was launched in the wake of World War II, as a devastated Western Europe sought to rebuild its economy. On May 9, 1950, French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman announced a plan, conceived by French businessman-turned-advisor, Jean Monnet, that proposed pooling European coal and steel production under a common authority. While contributing to economic recovery, this plan would also control the raw materials of war.

The Schuman Declaration was regarded as the first step toward achieving a united Europe—an ideal that in the past had been pursued only by force. Belgium, the Federal Republic of Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands accepted the French proposal and signed the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) Treaty in Paris on April 18, 1951. The Six set up the ECSC High Authority, to which member governments transferred portions of their sovereign powers. Coal and steel trade among the Six increased by 129 percent over the next five years. Encouraged by this success, the Six pursued integration in the military and political fields. When these efforts were derailed, European leaders decided to continue the unification of Europe on the economic front alone. A historic meeting in Messina, Italy, in June 1955, launched the negotiation of two treaties to establish:

- A European Economic Community (EEC) to merge separate national markets into a single market that would ensure the free movement of goods, people, capital, and services with a wide range of common economic policies; and
- A European Atomic Energy Community (EAEC or EURATOM) to further the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.

The Six signed the treaties on March 25, 1957, in Rome. Often referred to as the “Rome Treaties,” they came into force in January 1958.

Membership: Who can join the EU?

Union membership is open to any European country with a stable democratic government, a good human rights record, a properly functioning market economy, and sound macroeconomic policies. Candidates must also have the capacity to fulfill and to implement existing EU laws and policies (known as the *acquis communautaire*).

International Education: The European Union

Four enlargements have taken place: Denmark, Ireland, and the United Kingdom joined the original six European Community members (Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands) in 1973. Greece joined in 1981, followed by Spain and Portugal in 1986. Austria, Finland, and Sweden acceded to the European Union on January 1, 1995. Norway had also negotiated and signed an accession treaty in 1994, but Norwegian voters narrowly rejected membership in a referendum.

Although it was not officially an enlargement, the five Laender of the former German Democratic Republic entered the Union as part of a united Germany on October 3, 1990. A fifth enlargement of the European Union to more than twenty-five member states is in progress.

<http://www.eurunion.org>

International Education: The European Union

The European Community: Cooperating Nations or Unified Superstate?

"If we lapse back into nation-first policies, Europe will become a third-rate power."

–Jacques Delors, President of the European Commission

While some Americans criticize our political system, many Europeans look to the United States as a model. A long history of efforts to unite Europe have resulted in the recent creation of the [European Union \(EU\)](#).

Throughout its history, Europe has often been torn apart by war. Twice in this century, warfare has devastated nearly every European country. Even today, Europe has not achieved absolute peace.

After the [Second World War](#), [Jean Monnet](#), a French businessman and diplomat, proposed that future wars could be avoided if European nations had closer economic ties. In 1951, France, West Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, and Italy formed the [European Coal and Steel Community](#). For the first time in peacetime history, a group of European nations agreed to cooperate in producing and marketing vital goods. In the words of [Robert Schuman](#), the French foreign minister at the time, these economic ties would "make war not merely unthinkable but materially impossible."

Monnet, Schuman, and others dreamed that some day Europe might become politically unified like the United States. But they knew that the foundation for any political union had to begin with economic cooperation. So in 1957, the six members of the Coal and Steel Community proposed a Common Market where all trade barriers would eventually be abolished.

The Common Market treaty created the seeds for a unified European government. It empowered a Court of Justice to settle disputes among Common Market members. Although the treaty established a [European Parliament](#), it was little more than a forum for debate. Actual legislative power remained in the hands of a council made up of each nation's foreign ministers. The Council of Ministers appointed a 17-member [European Commission](#). This commission could propose and enforce laws applicable to all six member nations.

After 1957, six more European nations joined the Common Market: the United Kingdom, Denmark, Ireland, Greece, Portugal, and Spain. Together, the 12 Common Market countries formed the [European Community \(EC\)](#). Most European nations, including the

International Education: The European Union

former communist countries, either applied for EC membership or indicated an interest in doing so.

The Maastricht Treaty

In December 1991, the government leaders of all 12 European Community nations met in the Dutch town of Maastricht (MAHS-trick) to negotiate a new treaty of economic and political union.

Economically, their goal was to eliminate all trade barriers within the EC. Europeans, for example, would be able to buy an automobile anywhere within the EC and take it home without having to pay added taxes. In addition, the treaty envisioned a central bank and a single currency —the [European Currency Unit](#) or ECU. Farm products throughout the EC would continue to be protected by minimum prices and tariffs on cheaper foreign imports (something that the United States has opposed).

But it was the political side of the [Maastricht Treaty](#) that sparked the most controversy. It called for a "[European Union](#)" that came close to the ideal of a unified federal state like the United States. First, the treaty would establish a common European citizenship. Citizens from any EC country could travel, live, work, vote, and even run for political office anywhere within the European Community. Drivers would hold Euro drivers' licenses. College students could easily transfer credits between universities throughout the EC. A common police force would operate freely across old national borders. Taxation, however, would remain under the control of individual nations.

The European community would attempt to speak with one voice in international affairs. The treaty provided for a united European military force. Foreign policy decisions, however, would have to win the unanimous support of all 12 EC nations.

Under the Maastricht Treaty, the EC lawmaking system would change significantly. The European Commission would continue to propose legislation. And the council of 12 foreign ministers would retain the power to vote on proposed laws. But in response to charges that this system wouldn't represent ordinary people, provisions were added to the treaty to strengthen the European Parliament.

Directly elected by the citizens of EC nations, the European Parliament consists of 518 members. They represent political parties, such as Socialists and Christian Democrats, instead of member nations. Under the existing system, Parliament has few powers. The Maastricht Treaty would expand Parliament's legislative role, making EC lawmaking more responsive to ordinary people.

International Education: The European Union

The most enthusiastic supporters of the Maastricht Treaty were France's President [Francois Mitterrand](#) and Germany's Chancellor [Helmut Kohl](#). Going back centuries, France and Germany had fought many wars against one another. The willingness of these two historic foes to cooperate, persuaded other EC leaders at Maastricht to follow along.

The Danish Surprise

Early in 1992, the Maastricht Treaty was submitted to the 12 EC nations for ratification. It required unanimous approval. *Die Zeit*, a German newspaper, reminded its readers of Europe's bloody past. "Only the European union," the newspaper editorialized, "offers everyone protection against a repetition of history." Supporters hoped the treaty would give Europe the power to become a major player in the world order long dominated by the United States and Japan.

In June 1992, the masterminds of Maastricht were astonished when Danish voters rejected the treaty in a national referendum. One EC regulation banned the sale of a variety of Danish apple because of its small size. The voters in Denmark rebelled.

The Danish vote unleashed a torrent of criticism against the Maastricht Treaty. Some Europeans feared that the treaty would create "Eurocrats" —a new legion of bureaucrats who would regulate everything in sight. Others voiced unhappiness over the lack of democracy in the EC's political system. Citing the [conflict in Yugoslavia](#), still others questioned whether Europe was ready to defend itself militarily, independent of NATO. British voices warned of a loss of national identity. They contended that the European Union would destroy national diversity.

EC leaders had to face a sobering realization: Europe might not be ready to unify. Nevertheless, they decided to press on for treaty ratification, hoping that the Danes would reconsider their rejection.

On September 20, 1992, French voters barely approved the Maastricht Treaty by a 51 percent majority. President Mitterrand said this was a "wise choice in favor of youth and renewal." But the closeness of the vote reflected growing disillusionment with the treaty's ambitious plans.

In November, Prime Minister [John Major](#) narrowly won a vote of confidence in the British Parliament over whether to proceed with ratification of the Maastricht Treaty. Major announced that he would not ask Parliament for final approval of the treaty unless Danish voters reversed their decision in a second referendum scheduled for the spring of 1993. Denmark endorsed the treaty, and the British followed suit with an endorsement by

International Education: The European Union

Parliament. After a long and arduous process, the Maastricht Treaty was ratified in late 1993.

The European Union (EU)

The Maastricht Treaty created the European Union (EU), which currently claims 15 European nations as members. Founded in November 1993, the EU states its chief goal as the enhancement of political, economic, and social cooperation. In January 1999, the EU announced that 11 member states had agreed to introduce the unit of common European currency — the [euro](#) — into circulation. In 1998, the [Amsterdam Treaty](#) marked yet another step towards full unification with its promise to allow EU citizens to work together more effectively in such areas as equality between men and women and immigration. The Amsterdam Treaty also granted increased the powers of the European Parliament.

Despite its success, the European Union remains essentially a group of independent nations that have agreed to cooperate, especially in the area of trade. The original vision of a United States of Europe, a single state with no internal borders, is yet to be realized.

For Discussion and Writing

1. Why did leaders like Jean Monnet and Robert Schuman propose closer economic ties among the nations of Europe in the early 1950s?
2. Why do you think that the Maastricht Treaty faced such severe opposition?

For Further Information

[European Union](#): The home page of the European Union.

[Euroknow](#): A concise encyclopedia of terms related to the European Union and its history.

http://www.crf-usa.org/bria/bria9_3&4.html

International Education: The European Union

A North American Congress Activity

Nearly every nation in the world today has some sort of legislative system that makes the laws for its own people. The Maastricht Treaty, however, points Europe in the direction of a legislative authority whose laws would apply to 400 million people living in all 12 nations of the European Community. Some political scientists argue that this could become a model for other regional lawmaking arrangements.

Assume that sometime in the future the United States, Canada, and Mexico have formed a North American Congress. The purpose of this Congress would be to pass laws beneficial to Americans, Canadians, and Mexicans alike. Form small groups to decide which legislative areas listed below should be assigned to the North American Congress and which should remain with the national legislatures of the three countries. Each group should be prepared to defend its choices before the rest of the class.

Legislative Areas

1. environment
2. working conditions
3. minimum wage
4. health care
5. immigration
6. crime
7. import tariffs
8. consumer protection
9. education
10. taxes
11. traffic and transportation
12. military defense

For Further Discussion: What would be the advantages and disadvantages of having a North American Congress?

http://www.crf-usa.org/bria/bria9_3&4.html